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# SELMA LAGERLÖF

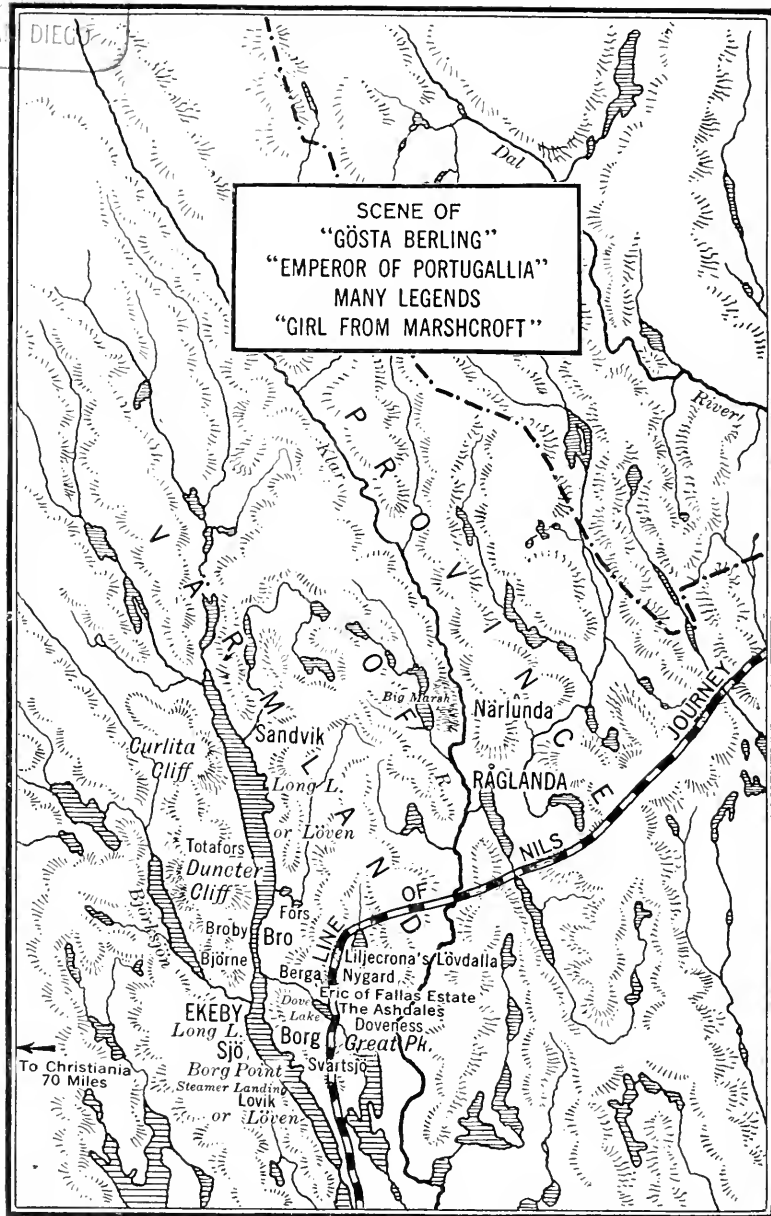
## THE WOMAN HER WORK HER MESSAGE

BY  
HARRY E. MAULE



DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY  
GARDEN CITY NEW YORK

SCENE OF  
 "GÖSTA BERLING"  
 "EMPEROR OF PORTUGALLIA"  
 MANY LEGENDS  
 "GIRL FROM MARSHCROFT"



# SELMA LAGERLÖF

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## THE WOMAN, HER WORK, HER MESSAGE

*Including liberal quotation from  
Dr. Lagerlöf's own autobiograph-  
ical writings and from  
some of her critics*



BY HARRY E. MAULE

DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY  
GARDEN CITY 1917 NEW YORK

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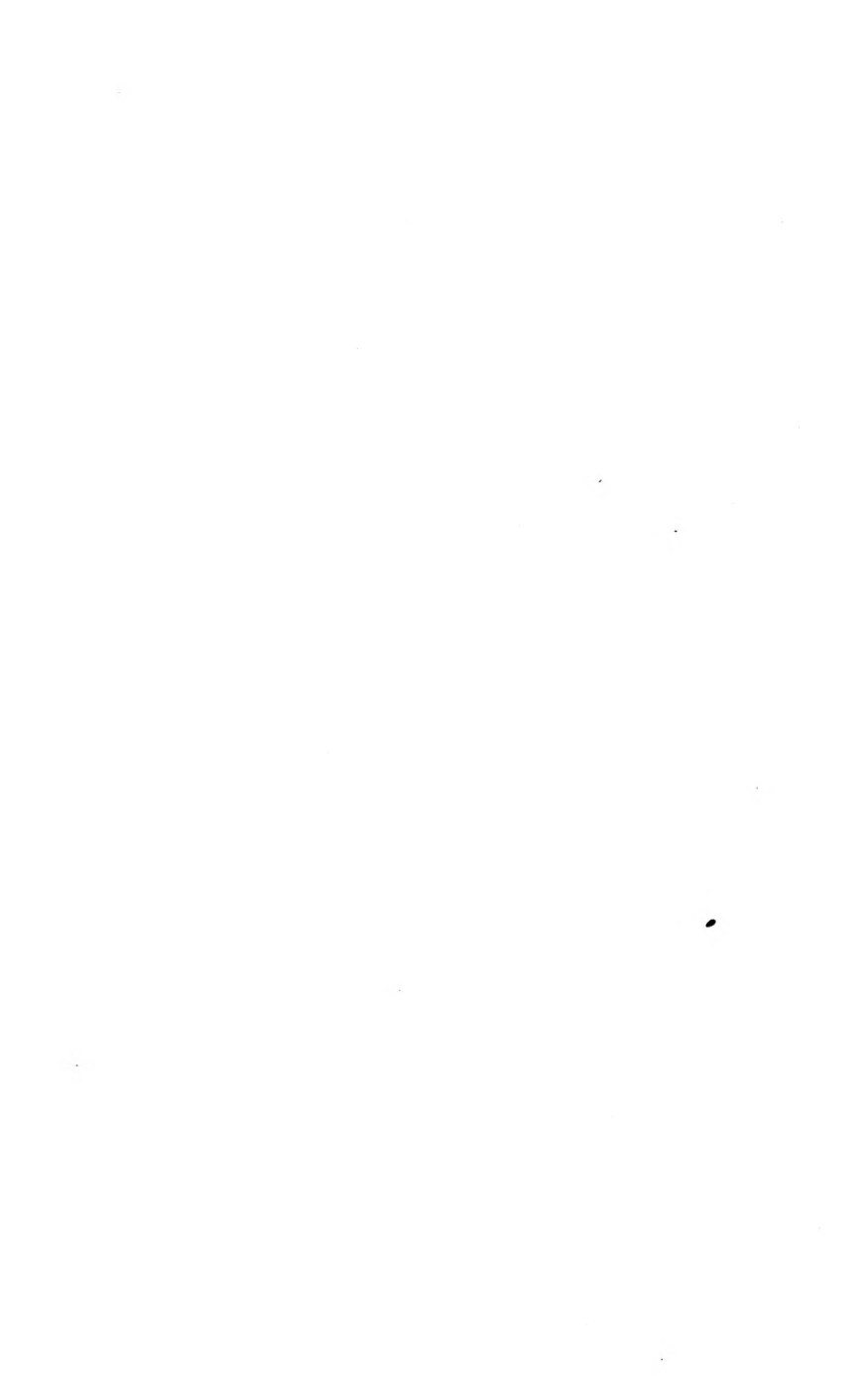
## NOTE

THIS little study of the life and work of Selma Lagerlöf is not so much an appreciation or a critique perhaps as it is an attempt to catch, and present to the American reader, some of the background from which the author draws her idealism and her illusive literary qualities. In so doing the author and editor has gone direct to the fountain-head of Dr. Lagerlöf's own autobiographical writings so far as possible—but even these are illusive and unsatisfactory without some of the plain facts which we in America would like to know of her. Therefore, the narrative is carried along through Miss Lagerlöf's own words wherever possible, but for the most part in a simple direct statement of her life and work and some of the influences behind it. There is probably no need to explain that the reason for publishing this sketch lies in the ever growing interest in Miss Lagerlöf as one of the world's great figures in literature.

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Garden City, New York









SELMA LAGERLÖF

# SELMA LAGERLÖF

## I

### THE WOMAN

**H**ONORED by her own generation and in her own country no less than throughout the whole civilized world, Selma Lagerlöf has fulfilled the happy portent of her name. For Lagerlöf, literally translated, means laurel leaf, and the absorbing life story of this quiet, calm-eyed little Swedish woman carries the reader from one crowning with laurel to the next. The only woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, she, shortly after that event was made a member of the exclusive Swedish Academy, and therefore is also the only woman ever to sit as one of those eighteen Immortals.

Born at a time when the cold star of realism was in the ascendant in Scandinavian literature, her soul filled with idealism, and steeped in the romance of ancient Northland sagas she stands forth a

brilliant exception to the materialism of her contemporaries. Comparing her books with the salient facts of her life it would be impossible to say what is so frequently said of others, that her work is in any material sense an autobiographical reflection. Yet leaving the obvious facts aside, the idealism, the nobility of conception, the richness of imagination are a true outpouring from the soul and an authentic expression of the author's reactions toward life. To quote from the introduction of Mr. Henry Goddard Leach, to the present American edition of *Jerusalem*; "Although Miss Lagerlöf has not been without her share of life's perplexities and of contact with her fellowmen, it is by intuition that she works, rather than by experience." How true that intuition has been is attested not alone by the critics, but also by the universal appeal of her characters and the world-wide popularity of her books.

In all her work Miss Lagerlöf's heart has turned with greatest understanding to that life in which she was born, the life of rural Sweden teeming with tradition, responsive always to the onslaughts and the miracles of Nature.

Here she has found material, which, though

local in its outward aspects she has been able to clothe with that universal human significance which may be found in nearly everything she writes.

So here at Mårbacka Manor, Sunne, in the province of Värmland, Sweden, into a large family of brothers and sisters on November 20th, 1858, was born the little Selma Ottiliana Louisa Lagerlöf.

Springing from Swedish gentlefolk of the land-owner class (her father was a retired army officer, and her mother was descended from a long line of distinguished clergymen) Miss Lagerlöf from earliest childhood seemed destined for the part of an onlooker and an interpreter of life. She never was strong enough to run wild over the farm with the other children of the family, and so, sitting at home in a deep chimney corner with the old folks and her books, she let her childish imagination carry her off on excursions which were denied the physically more active youngsters.

When there were no visitors at the manor house to enchant her childish fancy with the brave legends of the countryside the little girl had recourse to books. Here, as we shall see later she also was fortunate, for not only was she allowed

to browse in the ample library of her father but was helped by both her parents in her reading. Through their broad culture and interest in literature she was led to the best and her natural taste for romantic stories was fostered and directed. But late hours with her books was not encouraged, for in one place we are told that during her childhood she "was allowed to read Tegnér and Runeberg and Andersen" through only twice each winter. "In that way," adds Miss Lagerlöf, "I came by my first big debt." All of these and more the little girl read and loved, varying her wide reading with her own childish attempts at writing.

Then, at the age of nine the little girl went to Stockholm, to spend the winter with her Uncle and his family.

In an essay entitled "Two Predictions" which appears in her latest volume "Men and Trolls" Miss Lagerlöf describes the wonderful journey and her impressions of the great city. "Men and Trolls" has not yet appeared in English and the essay referred to has never been translated. Here she tells of her difficulty in becoming accustomed to city life, to the confinement, to

the hard cobblestone-paved streets, and to the city ways.

“I feel stupid and awkward with these bright city children” she says (using the present tense which is found so frequently in Swedish) “for I talk the homely Värmland dialect. But there are things indescribably wonderful in the old house where I stay. For one thing my Uncle has a bookcase full of Sir Walter Scott’s novels. Then there is the theatre.” She goes on to tell that sometimes her uncle would give the housekeeper a theatre ticket and the old woman would take the little girl and let her stand in front of her during the performance. “But what matter, time flies so at the theatre. Sometimes it is a play and sometimes an opera—a rosy world. It is fortunate that I had sat at mother’s knee and read Nosselt’s History, else how could I find my way. It is not a new world after all but rather my well loved world of romance presented in living pictures. Sometimes now in foreign lands I enter a theatre and feel the old thrill of expectation.

“For myself,” she continues, “I like the folk stories, but the old lady doesn’t care for the peasant plays. She really hurts me by saying that the fair

Helen is different from other folks, for I am in sympathy with my own people."

In the spring the little girl returned to her home and on school holidays played theatre with her brothers and sisters. Their favourite piece—one suspects Miss Lagerlöf's own favourite piece—was "My Rose of the Forest," "not," she remarks, "because it is the most interesting, but because it is the simplest, and in fact the only one we can present. I have to rehearse them all. We have no prompt book, only my memory to guide us. It is I who, with the help of quilts and blankets, make the stage scenery and it is I who make up the actors. I am the only one with any knowledge of all these things."

Then she goes on to describe the performance, how the family were the audience, and how she played the dual rôle of heroine and of an old man with long white hair. For the latter part, the little Swedish girl's own yellow hair was rearranged to imitate the locks of the aged man. "I wonder," she continues, "what the author would have said? Perhaps he would have been pleased.

"From that day I long to write great plays and



not to sit on a school-bench and waste my time in composition and arithmetic.

“At fifteen I have read all the poets in the house and have written my first verse.” Here Miss Lagerlöf remarks that when she first realized her gift of rhyming she resolved to become as great as the poets she had read. She had always intended to write novels and plays but now at fifteen she felt that nothing was so desirable as to write great poetry. One evening she felt her gift of rhyming and the whole night long she lay awake composing verse after verse. But, she goes on to say, of all the verses she wrote at this period there is only one that she remembers or is pleased with. “And that,” she says, “I sometimes whisper to myself as I stand in the shade of the trees and watch the evening sun’s light flame over the plain and valley. This little couplet reads:

*“Det är så mörkt under lindarna  
Så ängsligt stilla i vindarna”*

*Roughly translated:*

It is so dark beneath the lindens  
The winds are so ominously still

At twenty she is back again in Stockholm to take a competitive examination for entrance to the Teachers' College. She describes her anxiety because the number of students was limited to twenty-five and there were forty taking the examinations. Finally, when she hears that she is one of the fortunate twenty-five who have passed in the examinations she says that she steals off to the other end of the house to be alone. She is no longer helpless and dependent on others but has a career before her and is going to manage her own life.

Thus in 1882, after a year at Sjöberg's Lyceum for Girls, in Stockholm, Miss Lagerlöf entered the Teachers' College where she remained for three years, returning for all her vacations to her beloved Värmland home where, as we shall later see, she was ever living in the soul, taking deeper and deeper within herself the legends of that beautiful, mystical land, for the great book which was to turn the course of her life.

Her studies completed, she received an appointment to teach in the Grammar School for Girls at Landskrona, Province of Skane. There she hoped to find time for literary work, and much that she did then was later turned to good purpose. Accord-

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ing to Miss Lagerlöf's own account, however, nothing worth while was accomplished—only some sonnets in the Swedish magazines, and endless folk tales told after school to her pupils.

This phase of Miss Lagerlöf's life is told by herself in an appealing little autobiographical account of how she came to write her first book "The Story of Gösta Berling" which, of course will stand as long as her works are known as a classic of Swedish romance.

## II

### THE STORY OF A STORY

*(A digest of Miss Lagerlöf's own account of her early literary struggles, published under the above title in her collection of short stories "The Girl From the Marsh Croft." A charming and irresistible autobiographical account, it has nevertheless all the qualities that mark Miss Lagerlöf's fiction. It is characteristic of her best work, and typical of her modesty and self detachment.)*

ONCE there was a story that wanted to be told and sent out in the world. This was very natural, inasmuch as it knew that it was already as good as finished. Many, through remarkable deeds and strange events, had helped create it; others, had added their straws to it by again and again relating these things. What it lacked was merely a matter of being joined together, so that it could travel comfortably through the country. As yet it was only a confused jumble of stories—a big, formless cloud of adventures rushing hither and thither like a swarm of stray bees on a summer's day, not know-

ing where they will find some one who can gather them into a hive.

The story that wanted to be told had sprung up in Värmland, and you may be sure that it circled over many mills and manors, over many parsonages and many homes of military officers, in the beautiful province, peering through the windows and begging to be cared for. But it was forced to make many futile attempts, for everywhere it was turned away. Anything else was hardly to be expected. People had many things of much more importance to think of.

Finally the story came to an old place called Marbacka. It was a little homestead, with low buildings overshadowed by giant trees. At one time it had been a parsonage, and it was as if this had set a certain stamp upon the place which it could not lose. They seemed to have a greater love for books and reading there than elsewhere, and an air of restfulness and peace always pervaded it. Here there was never any rush of duties or bickerings with servants, nor were hatred and dissension given house room, either. One who happened to be a guest in this home was not expected to take life too seriously, but was made

to feel that his first duty was to be light-hearted and to know that for one and all who lived on this estate our Lord managed everything for the best.

As I think of the matter now, it seems to me that the story of which I speak must have lingered thereabout a great many years, in a vain longing to be told, that it must have enwrapped the place, as a mist shrouds a mountain summit—now and then letting one of its many adventures rain down upon it.

. . . . .

Sometimes the dear adventurers came to the homestead in more tangible form. Aged and poverty-stricken army officers would drive up to the house behind rickety old horses and in rickety carryalls, and stay for weeks at a time. In the evening, when the toddy had put courage into them, they would talk of the time when they had danced in stockingless shoes, so that their feet would look small, of how they had curled their hair and dyed their mustaches. One of them told of how he had once tried to take a pretty young girl back to her sweetheart, and of being hunted by wolves on the way; another

had been at the Christmas feast where an angered guest had flung all the hazel-grouse at the wall because some one had made him believe they were crows; a third had seen the old gentleman who used to sit at a plain deal table and play Beethoven.

. . . . .

It must have been because so many legends and traditions hovered about the farm that one of the children growing up there longed to become a narrator. It was not one of the boys, however, for they were away at school almost the whole year and the story did not get much of a hold upon them. But it was one of the girls—one who was delicate and could not romp and play like other children, and who found her keenest enjoyment in reading and hearing stories about all the great and wonderful things which had happened in the world.

However, at the start it was not the girl's intention to write about the stories and legends surrounding her. She had not the remotest idea that a book could be made of these adventures, which she had so often heard related that to her

they seemed the most commonplace things in the world. When she tried to write, she chose material from her books, stringing together stories of the Sultans in "Thousand and One Nights." Walter Scott's heroes, and Snorre Sturleson's "Kings of Romance."

It need hardly be said that what she wrote was the least original and the crudest that has ever been put upon paper. But this very naturally she herself did not see. She went about at home on the quiet farm, filling every scrap of paper she could lay her hands on with verse and prose, with plays and romances. When she was not writing, she sat and waited for success. And success was to consist in this: Some stranger who was very learned and influential, by some rare freak of fortune, was to come and discover what she had written and find it worth printing. After that, the rest would come of itself. Meanwhile nothing of the sort happened.

. . . . .

And so, one autumn, when she was two-and-twenty, she went to Stockholm to prepare herself for the vocation of teacher.



The girl soon became absorbed in her work. She wrote no more, but went in for studies and lectures. It actually looked as though the story would lose her altogether.

Then something extraordinary happened. This same autumn, when she had been living a couple of months amid gray streets and house walls, she was walking one day up Malmskillnad Street with a bundle of books under her arm. She had just come from a lecture on the history of literature. The lecture must have been about Bellman and Runeberg, because she was thinking of them and of the characters that live in their verses. She said to herself that Runeberg's jolly warriors and Bellman's happy-go-lucky roisterers were the very best material a writer could have to work with. And suddenly this thought flashed upon her: Värmland, the world in which you have been living, is not less remarkable than that of Fredman or Fanrik Stal. If you can only learn how to handle it, you will find that your material is quite as good as theirs.

Thus she caught her first glimpse of the story. And the instant she saw it, the ground under her seemed to rock. The whole long Malmskillnad

Street, from Hann Street Hill to the fire-house, rose toward the skies and sank again—rose and sank. She stood still a long while, until the street had settled itself. She gazed with astonishment at the passers-by, who walked calmly on, apparently unconscious of the miracle that had taken place.

Then and there the girl determined that she would write the story of Värmland's Cavaliers, and never for an instant did she relinquish the thought of it; but many long years elapsed before the determination was carried out.

. . . . .

During these years things were constantly happening which helped mould it. One morning, on a school holiday, as she sat at the breakfast table with her father, the two of them talked of old times. He was telling her of an acquaintance of his youth, whom he described as the most fascinating of men. This man brought joy and cheer with him wherever he went. He could sing; he composed music; he improvised verse. If he struck up a dance tune not only the young folk danced, but old men and old women, high and

low. If he made a speech, one had to laugh or cry, whichever he wished. If he drank himself full, he played and talked better than when he was sober, and when he fell in love with a woman, it was impossible for her to resist him. If he did foolish things, one forgave him; if he felt sad, one wanted to do anything and everything to see him glad again. But any great success in life he had never had, despite his wealth of talents. He had lived mostly at the foundries in Värmland as private tutor. Finally, he was ordained as a minister. This was the highest that he had attained.

After this conversation she saw the hero of her story better than heretofore, and with that a little life and action came into it. One fine day a name was given to the hero, he was called Gösta Berling. Whence he got the name she never knew. It was as if he had named himself.

Another time she had come home for the Christmas holidays. One evening the whole family went off to a Christmas party a good distance from home in a terrible blizzard. It turned out to be a longer drive than one would have thought. The horse ploughed his way through the drifts at a

creeping pace. For several hours she sat in the sleigh in the blinding snowstorm thinking of the story. When they at length reached their destination, she had thought out her first chapter. It was the one about the Christmas night at the smithy. And what a chapter! It was her first and for many years her only one. It was written in verse, for the original plan was that it should be a romance cycle, like "Fänrik Stål's Sagas." But by degrees this was changed, and for a time she was impressed that it should be written as drama. The Christmas night was worked over to go in as the first act. But this attempt was not successful, either; at last she decided to write the story as a novel. Then the chapter was done into prose. It grew enormously long, covering forty written pages. In the final revision it took up only nine.

A few years later came a second chapter. It was the story of the Ball at Borg and of the wolves that hunted Gösta Berling and Anna Stjernhök.

. . . . .

As a matter of fact, all this occurred during the 'eighties, when stern Realism was at its height.

She admired the great masters of that time, never thinking that one could use any other style in writing than the one they employed. For her own part, she liked the romanticists better, but romanticism was dead, and she was hardly the one to think of reviving its form and expression! Although her brain was filled to overflowing with stories of ghosts and mad love, of wondrously beautiful women and adventure-loving cavaliers, she tried to write about it all in calm, realistic prose. She was not very clear-visioned. Another would have seen that the impossible was impossible.

. . . . .

The longing came over her in this manner: The homestead where she had grown up was sold. She journeyed to the home of her childhood to see it once again before strangers should occupy it. As she was leaving, perhaps never more to see the dear old place, she decided in all meekness and humility to write the book in her own way and according to her own poor abilities. It was not going to be any great masterwork, as she had hoped. It might be a book at which people

would laugh, but anyway she would write it—write it for herself, to save for herself what she could still save of the home—the dear old stories, the sweet peace of the care-free days, and the beautiful landscape with the long lakes and the many-hued blue hills.

But for her, who had hoped that she might yet learn to write a book people would care to read, it seemed as if she had relinquished the very thing in life she had been most eager to win. It was the hardest sacrifice she had ever made.

A few weeks later, she was again at her home in Landskrona seated at her desk. She began writing—she did not exactly know what this was to be—but she was not going to be afraid of strong words, of exclamations, of interrogations, nor would she be afraid to give herself with all her childishness and all her dreams! After she had come to this decision, the pen began to move almost of itself. This made her quite delirious. She was carried away with enthusiasm. Ah, this was writing! Unfamiliar thoughts and things, or, rather, things she had never surmised were stored away in her brain, crowded down upon the paper. The pages were filled so quickly it aston-

ished her. What had hitherto required months—no, years—to work out, was now accomplished in a couple of hours. That evening she wrote the story of the young countess's tramp over the ice on Lake Löven, and the flood at Ekeby.

The following afternoon she wrote the scene in which the gouty ensign, Rutger von Örneclou, tries to raise himself in bed to dance the Cachuca, and the evening of the next day appeared the story of the old *Mamsell* who went off to visit the parsimonious Broby clergyman.

Now she knew for a certainty that in this way she could write the book; but she was just as certain that no one would have the patience to read it through.

. . . . .

In the spring of 1890 *Idun* invited prize competitors to send in short novelettes of about one hundred pages. Here was an opening for a story that wanted to be told and sent into the world. It must have been the story itself that prompted her sister to suggest that she make use of this opportunity. Here, at last, was a way of finding out whether her story was hopelessly bad! If

it took the prize, much would be gained; if it didn't, she would simply stand where she had stood before.

. . . . .

There were only twenty-four hours of the precious time left, and still twenty pages to be written.

On this the last day they were all invited to a house party, and were to be away over night. Naturally, she too had to go. When the party was over and the guests had retired to their rooms, she sat up in the strange house the whole night, writing.

At times she felt very queer. The place where she was visiting happened to be the estate on which the wicked Sintram had once lived. Fate, in a singular way, had brought her there on the very night that she must write about him who sat in the rocker and rocked.

Now and then she would look up from her work and listen in the direction of the drawing-room, for the possible sound of a pair of rockers in motion; but nothing was heard. In the morning, at the stroke of six, her five chapters were finished.

. . . . .



This happened on one of the last days in July. Toward the end of August *Idun* contained a notice to the effect that something over twenty manuscripts had been received by the editors, but that one or two among them were so confusedly written they could not be counted in.

Then she gave up waiting for results. She knew, of course, which novelette was so "confusedly written" that it could not be counted in.

One afternoon in November she received a curious telegram. It simply contained the words "Hearty Congratulations," and was signed by three of her college classmates.

To her it seemed a terribly long wait until noon of the following day, when the Stockholm papers were distributed. When the paper was in her hands she had to search long before finding anything. Finally, on the last page she found a little notice in small type which told that the prize had been awarded to her.

To another it might have not meant so much, perhaps, but for her it meant that she could devote herself to the calling which all her life she had longed to pursue.

There is but little to add to this: The story that wanted to be told and sent out in the world had begun to move toward its goal. Now it was to be written, at least, though it might take a few years to complete it.

She who was writing the story had gone to Stockholm about Christmas time, after she had received the prize.

The editor of *Idun* volunteered to publish the book as soon as it was finished.

If she could ever find time to write it!

The evening before she was to return to Landskrona she spent with her loyal friend, Baroness Adlersparre, to whom she read a few chapters aloud.

“Esselde” listened, as only she could listen! After the reading she sat quietly thinking. “How long will it be before all of it is ready?” she asked finally.

“Three or four years.”

Then they parted.

The next morning, two hours before she was to leave Stockholm, she received a message from Esselde, asking her to come to her before leaving town.

The old baroness was in her most positive and determined mood. "Now you must take a leave of absence for a year and finish the book," she said, "I shall procure the necessary funds."

Fifteen minutes later the girl was on her way to the Principal of the Teachers' College to ask her assistance in securing a substitute.

At one o'clock she was happily seated in the railway carriage. But now she was going no farther than Sörmland, where she had good friends who lived in a charming villa.

And so they—Otto Gumaelius and his wife—gave her the freedom of their home—freedom to work, and peace, and the best of care for nearly a year, until the book was finished.

Now, at last, she could write from morning till night. It was the happiest time of her life.

But when the story was finished at the close of the summer, it looked strange. It was wild and disjointed—the connecting threads were so loosely drawn that all the parts seemed bent upon following their old inclination to wander off, each on its own way.

It never became what it should have become. Its misfortune was that it had been compelled to

wait so long to be told. If it was not properly disciplined and restrained, it was mostly because the author was so overjoyed by the thought that at last she had been privileged to write it.

### III

#### HER WORK

*"She is an idealist pure and simple in a world given over to realism, yet such is the perfection of her style and the witchery of her fancy that a generation of realists worship her."*—*The London Times*.

IN THE foregoing pages we have seen how Miss Lagerlöf started her literary career; how in spite of severe handicaps her very first work was crowned with distinguished success, foreshadowing that fate which so truly fulfills the promise of her name. We have seen how the creation of "The Story of Gösta Berling" made it possible for her to give up teaching and devote her whole time and thought to her writing.

Then what of the other books that followed? What account has she made of her opportunity and by what work did she achieve her present exalted position?

To place her in a word is of course impossible, yet perhaps the above quoted passage from *The*

London *Times* gives as true a summary of her position as necessary. One of her admirers has said that, gazing down a forest valley dotted with little redroofed Swedish farmhouses and black roofed churches she knows exactly what is transpiring within. Moreover, it might further be said that she knows just what is going on in the hearts of the inhabitants.

Viewing her work as a whole it reveals a biblical simplicity of style, the trusting heart of a child and at the same time the mystic insight of a seer. Speaking of Dr. Lagerlöf in his volume of interpretation "Voices of To-Morrow" Edwin Björkman says: "Selma Lagerlöf is one of the greatest of an increasing group of writers who represent a synthesis of two past literary epochs, and who, for this reason, must be held especially representative of the literary epoch that is now coming. She has revived not only the courage but the ability to feel and dream and aspire that belonged to the scorned romanticists of the early nineteenth century. But this recovery of something long held to be lost and outlived forever she has achieved for us without surrender of that intimate connection between poetry and real life which was established

by the naturalists in the latter half of the same century." So deep is her message as J. B. Kerfoot said in *Life* that, "the wise cannot find bottom nor the child get beyond its depth." English critics have compared her with George Eliot, but her literary traditions, sprung from the rich folklore of Sweden and the wide reading of a cultivated Scandinavian home, defy the ordinary catch-as-catch-can comparisons of literary criticism. She "is as national" says Walter Prichard Eaton, "as a song by Grieg or a play by Tchekhov. And like all deeply national art, it is therefore universal." Of these things, however, Miss Lagerlöf with characteristic modesty herself has spoken. In her Nobel Prize address, which is quoted later in this paper she dwelt feelingly upon her literary inheritance. Still, we feel that Selma Lagerlöf is—just Selma Lagerlöf because of her complete independence of accepted forms and because of her very abundance which bursts through the conventional bounds of technique to find its own meaning in life's drama.

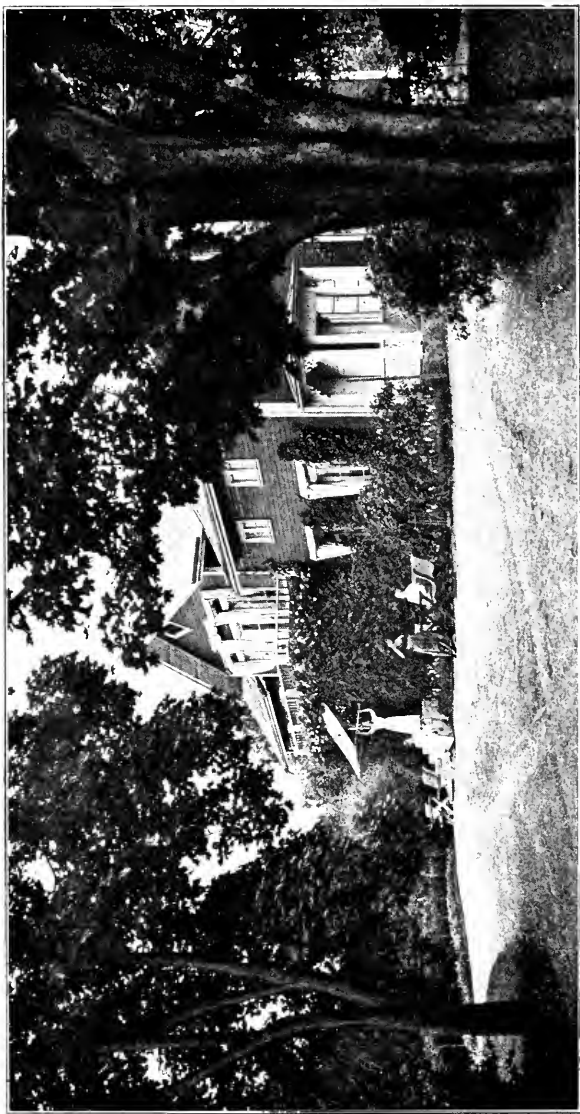
In her choice of material Dr. Lagerlöf usually selects the common clay of mankind, but in the infinite fineness of her tooling, we see the object

in all its universality, so that every heart is touched, every mind is led to understand the inscrutable ways of life with her people. And in the light of her inner vision even inanimate objects are touched with the quickening influence so that we come to feel the dark woods, the sleeping waters, the gray northern stones and the tender green things of spring to be an eternal part of the woof of her dream. To her there is no definite line of demarcation between the conscious and the unconscious, the animate and the inanimate. Through her constant mastery over the bounds of the merely physical we come to realize that when she tempts us into far-off, fantastic worlds of her own making, her ultimate object is to help us see the inner meanings of the too often over-emphasized superficial actualities of our own existence.

"Reading Selma Lagerlöf," says the Swedish composer, Hugo Alfven, "is like sitting in the dusk of a Spanish cathedral. . . . Afterward, one does not know whether what he has seen was dream or reality, but certainly he has been on holy ground." In the same strain, to quote one of our own American critics, Mr. Henry Goddard Leach of the American Scandinavian Foundation,







### MÄRBACKA

Miss Lagerlöf's ancestral home at Märbacka, Sime Värmland. This is the place where she was born and has written most of her books. It is in the heart of the Gösta Berling country, and is in fact the Liljecrona's Lövdalla of her stories

said in his warmly appreciative introduction to "Jerusalem": "The average mind, whether Swedish or Anglo-Saxon, soon wearies of heartless preciseness in literature and welcomes an idealism as wholesome as that of Miss Lagerlöf. Furthermore, the Swedish authoress attracts her readers by a diction unique unto herself as singular as the English sentences of Charles Lamb. Her style may be described as prose rhapsody held in restraint, at times passionately breaking its bonds. . . . It is by intuition that she works rather than by experience. . . . She sees her characters with woman's warm and delicate sympathy and with the clear vision of childhood. . . . Selma Lagerlöf takes her delight in developing, not the psychology of the unusual but in analyzing the motives and emotions of the normal mind."

Thus out of the multitude of her characters not one is there who does not stand out as an interpretation of the Great Enigma, and of the universal human traits which guide our destinies. There is Ingmar Ingmarsson who scarified his love that he might retain the Ingmarsson farm; and big Ingmar who communed with his long dead father to determine his course in choosing public shame to

right the wrong that he had done "because it is the way of we Ingmarssons." Then we have happy, carefree Gösta Berling "weakest and strongest of men" perennial playboy of the northern world of heedless joy and tragedy; and his impecunious followers the Cavaliers, the pensioners at Ekeby. Who, that has ever read of him can forget poor old Jan of Ruffuck Croft, that lowly Emperor of Portugallia, who as his good Katrina said, "is wiser than we know." Can we ever forget his arrival at the pier intending to protect his little Glory Goldie Sunnycastle from her enemies, "Pride and Hardness, Lust and Vice."

And of the women, contrast the indomitable Mistress at Ekeby with fair Gertrude of "Jerusalem", a frail flower mighty in her spiritual strength; or with the fascinating Marianne, gay, frivolous, lightsome, yet always introspective until she was lifted out of herself by Gösta.

Impossible to mention them all, a goodly host, whom the world is the better off and the happier for knowing.

To resume where Miss Lagerlöf left off in her inimitable "The Story of a S.ory," it may be said that "Gösta Berling" was published in book form

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in Sweden in 1894. Idealism in a world of realism; a romance amidst the smother of gray Scandinavian pessimism, this saga of Gösta Berling, poet, philosopher, carefree vagabond of Löven's sunny shores, became the epic of Värmland, and her countrymen gave full honour to its writer. Soon the book was translated and published in all the other European countries. In 1899 it appeared in the United States in the translation of Pauline Bancroft Flach.

Of Miss Lagerlöf's three great novels, "Gösta Berling," "Jerusalem," and "The Emperor of Portugallia," it must forever remain a matter of individual taste as to which is the best. But whichever one of these may be chosen by the critic, one will always be tempted to place on a par with it her great juvenile classics "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils" and "The Further Adventures of Nils."

A brief description of "The Story of Gösta Berling" perhaps may not be out of order here after so much has been said in the foregoing pages.

Consult the map of modern Sweden and in the province of Värmland one finds Lake Fryken, and upon its shores the village of Sunne. It is

here in the old rectory, Mårbacka Manor, that Miss Lagerlöf grew to womanhood, and it is here that she now lives. This, and the country round-about is the setting for "Gösta Berling." Lake Fryken is Lake Löven, or, as she so frequently calls it "Long Lake," and Mårbacka is Liljecrona's Lövdalla of "Gösta Berling," "Liljecrona's Home" and of so many other of her stories.

At the opening of "The Story of Gösta Berling," the hero, an outcast minister of the gospel, is rescued by the Mistress of Ekeby from a snow-bank where he had cast himself down to die. What more magnificent figure in all fiction than this masterful lady of the seven iron works! When first Gösta saw her she was "on the way home from the charcoal kilns with sooty hands and a clay pipe in her mouth, dressed in a short unlined, sheepskin jacket and a striped homespun skirt, with tarred shoes on her feet and a sheath knife in her bosom." Ah yes, a wonderful woman! Hear her own words, "If I wave one finger the governor comes, if I wave with two the bishop comes, and if I wave with three all the chapter and the aldermen and mine-owners in Värmland dance to my music."

And to the bachelors wing in the great manor house at Ekeby where lived her pensioners at leisured ease she brought Gösta Berling, drunken preacher, poet, "lord of 10,000 kisses and 13,000 love letters." Gösta Berling whom all women love and who loves them all—but deceives them not—who is yet "strongest and weakest of men" a drunkard, yet heroic, a scamp, yet noble and self-sacrificing, a tremendous force for evil, and a tremendous force for good. On Christmas Eve the pensioners who find shelter beneath this woman's hospitable roof hold a revel in the old smithy. From the forge steps the devil in full panoply of hoofs and horns and reveals to them the terrible compact which their benefactress has made with him to atone for her sins. And so, these shameless cavaliers in hypocritical self-righteousness drive forth the one who had sheltered them. And even Gösta Berling, most lately indebted to the iron mistress, sits quiescent during her humiliation and expulsion.

For a year the pensioners run the seven estates to suit themselves. Their lives are filled with mad pranks and insane adventures. "How are you all at Ekeby?" the people ask. "Milk and honey flow

there," answers the poet Gösta. "We empty the mountains of iron and fill our cellar with wine. The fields bear gold with which we gild life's misery, and we cut down our woods to build bowling alleys and summer houses."

Milk and honey indeed! And while the pensioners dance the seven estates go to rack and ruin, the old mistress stalks about the country with a beggar's crutch. It is during these mad pranks that we meet the fascinating Marianne Sinclair, Ebba Dohna, the lowly broom girl, Anna and many other women who could not resist the charms of Gösta Berling's personality. Above all, we remember the gentle Countess Elizabeth who, conscience stricken at her own unwelcome passion for the poet, deserts her home and pettish husband. Divorced and a homeless wanderer, fate brings her at last to a refuge at Ekeby. Here she asks of Gösta a supreme sacrifice. They are married and through her influence Gösta Berling's redemption is accomplished. The manor house is rebuilt, the contract with the devil is cancelled, the rule of the pensioners is ended, and together the Countess and Gösta spend their lives in glorious self-renunciation.

At the end the old mistress returns home to die.



For her ancient sin was the storm of God let loose, bringing ruin and destruction in its path, but at the end sweeping the heavens clear of clouds.

Thus has Miss Lagerlöf woven from the skeins of countryside legend a wonderful tapestry of Värmland. A tapestry of rich colours and great crude figures it is, but her gentle humour, her ever present idealism, and the invariable delicacy of her style have set it apart from anything which she or any other Scandinavian writer has done.

Miss Lagerlöf's next work, a book of short stories entitled "Invisible Links" was published in 1894. Many of the stories are based on the old Swedish sagas, and in all of them we feel the very spirit of the North; the romance which broods over the desolate forests and peoples the wilderness with supernatural beings. The title of the book is intended to convey the relation of human beings to these manifestations of nature. For in some hidden half-comprehended way their lives are linked with the animating spirit which controls the elements. Unlike the characters of "Gösta Berling" the people in these tales are mostly humble peasants, fisher folk and other toilers, and as one

critic said, the events are narrated so that one not only sees the immediate story in hand but the entire lives of the individuals involved. The book was translated by Mrs. Flach and published in this country in the fall of 1899. The critics here were extravagant in their praise of Miss Lagerlöf as a short story writer, comparing her favourably with Kipling, Hawthorne, and Poe.

Following the publication of "Invisible Links" King Oscar of Sweden and his son Prince Eugen (widely known as a talented and successful landscape painter) extended financial aid to Miss Lagerlöf who also was awarded at this time a small stipend by the Swedish Academy in acknowledgment of her achievements. The same year, in company with Sophie Elkan, the author, she made her first trip to Italy. The immediate result of that trip was "The Miracles of Antichrist," published in Sweden in 1897, and in this country in Mrs. Flach's translation in the spring of 1899.

In this book Miss Lagerlöf showed herself completely at home among the legends and folk tales of Sicily. It is rich in the warm colours of the South and apparently her understanding

of the hot blooded Sicilians is as great as it is of the introspective Swedish people. There are characters in this book long to be remembered but it is in the development of the theme that we chiefly marvel. She takes as her text the ancient Sicilian legend which says: "When Antichrist comes he shall seem as Christ. There shall be great want, and Antichrist shall go from land to land and give bread to the poor. And he shall find many followers." Upon this she builds a colorful tale of modern Sicily at the time when revolutionary Socialism swept the island, making heavy inroads upon the influence of the Church.

An Englishwoman, coveting the wonderful image of the Christchild in the church at Rome, makes an exact duplicate, except that upon the crown of the spurious image is scratched the legend "My Kingdom is only of this World." While pretending to kneel before the shrine she takes the holy image and puts in its place her earthly counterfeit. Months afterward a miracle comes to pass in that the church bells ring, and the true image of the Christchild is found standing at the door. The monks tear down the false statue and cast it into the marketplace, restoring the

sacred one to its niche. The image whose "Kingdom is only of this world" is picked up and carried into Sicily where as Antichrist, the personification of agnostic ideals, it works many miracles of material aid to the poor and destitute of the land.

To put it broadly Antichrist represents the spirit of Socialism, whose kingdom was only of this world, recognizing always the rights of man but admitting naught of God. The story ends with the Pope advising Father Gondo as to the restoration of Christianity in the Sicilian towns which have been won over to Socialism. "Father Gondo," said the Pope, sternly, "when you held the image in your arms you wished to burn him. Why? Why were you not loving to him? Why did you not carry him back to the little Christchild on the Capitolium from whom he proceeded?"

"That is what you wandering monks could do. You could take the great popular movement in your arms, while it is still lying like a child in its swaddling clothes, and you could bear it to Jesus' feet; and Antichrist would see that he is nothing but an imitation of Christ, and would acknowledge him his Lord and Master. But you do not do so.

You cast antichristianity on the pyre, and soon he in turn will cast you there. . . . We do not fear him. When he comes to storm the Capitol, . . . we shall meet him and we shall lead him to Christ.”\*

“From a Swedish Homestead,” Miss Lagerlöf’s next book was published in 1899, and was brought out in this country in the English of Jessie Brochner, in 1901.†

The book is made up of a novelette “The Story of a Country House” otherwise known as “From a Swedish Homestead,” the remarkable “Queens of Kungahalla” and eight other shorter stories. Of these only three “The Fisherman’s Ring,” “Santa Catarina of Siena” and “The Emperor’s Money Chest” are laid elsewhere than in Sweden, the former in Italy, and the third in the “black country” around Charleroi, an allegory touching upon the labour troubles that then beset Belgium.

It is, however, the first story in the volume, “The Story of a Country House” that has at-

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\* It should be borne in mind that this story was written before the wide spread of Fabian and Christian Socialism, and as such may be taken as rather a remarkable prophecy by Miss Lagerlöf.

†A new edition of this book was published in 1916 in format uniform with Miss Lagerlöf’s later work, in response to the demand.

tracted the greatest attention. Here as clearly as anywhere in her work runs that vein of mystic beauty underlying all she does. In the hands of the grim Scandivanian realists this story would have been almost too harrowing, but handled with Miss Lagerlöf's delicacy of touch, it becomes a fantasy nearly on a par with "The Emperor of Portugallia." The story deals with a young student at Upsala University who goes into the northern woods to recoup the family fortunes, and who loses his reason through self reproach and pity when his great flock of sheep are frozen to death before his eyes in a storm. This youth of the landed gentry then becomes a peddler of odd trinkets throughout the countryside known only as "The Goat" until through love he is restored to his reason and to his family.

Following the completion of "From a Swedish Homestead," in 1899, Miss Lagerlöf made her first trip to the Orient from which came her second great classic, "Jerusalem." A few years before a company of peasants from Nås, a severe parish of the sturdy rural district of Dalecarlia, had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to join a colony

formed by a Mrs. Edward Gordon of Chicago who had established a mission there made up for the most part of Swedish-Americans.

Thus the historical background of "Jerusalem." Their aim was practical as well as spiritual, for the mission conducted a school, a hospital, and otherwise aided in much needed public works.

Not only were their early experiences in Jerusalem of the most harrowing nature through the rigours of the unaccustomed climate, the fevers which assailed them, and the scanty bounty of a desert land but also there came back to Sweden rumours of the most alarming sort of the conduct of the pilgrims in the Holy Land.

To ascertain the truth of these rumours, and to probe the cause of the saying, then prevalent in Sweden, that "Jerusalem kills," Miss Lagerlöf made the journey to Palestine in 1899-1900.

Only too truly did she substantiate the grim northern acceptance of an inevitable fate in the Holy Land. "Jerusalem kills!" It was all too true; for the unhappy Dalecarlians, removed from their bracing northern climate, fell an easy prey to the hardships of the desert. Death had stalked among them, but with that determination which

has won for the Dalecarlians the term of "the backbone of the Swedish nation" they held to their task. As to the charges, it was substantiated that the Swedish mission in its liberal policy toward Christian and Moslem alike had earned the enmity of the other missions there, making easy traffic for the stories which caused such heartache in the Dalecarlian homesteads.

Of these conditions Miss Lagerlöf wrote:

"Here the Catholic speaks evil of the Protestant, the Methodist of the Quaker, the Lutheran of the Reform sect. . . . Here envy lurks; here the fanatic looks askance at the man of sound ideals; here orthodox contends with heretic; here one finds neither pity nor tolerance; here one hates for God's highest glory's sake every human being. . . . Here is the soulhoulder's Jerusalem. Here is the evil tongue's Jerusalem. Here one persecutes without cessation; here one murders without weapons. It is this Jerusalem that kills."

Perhaps one of the greatest tests of Miss Lagerlöf's artistry was the task of weaving into a work of fiction this background of facts, which were at the time a matter of pressing national importance. To take facts as they are, retain the panorama-like



truth for a background, and then create in the foreground a work of art which is anything more than an obvious and laboured superstructure is a feat which few have accomplished. The raw colours of the background are yet too new, too stark in their insufficiently understood meaning, to work into a creative story.

Yet on her return from the Holy Land, Miss Lagerlöf wrote the first volume of "Jerusalem," and had the satisfaction of seeing it hailed as her masterpiece. The book was published in Sweden in 1901, but was not brought out in this country until 1915 in the English of Velma Swanston Howard who has translated all of Miss Lagerlöf's later work and who is her authorized representative in this country.

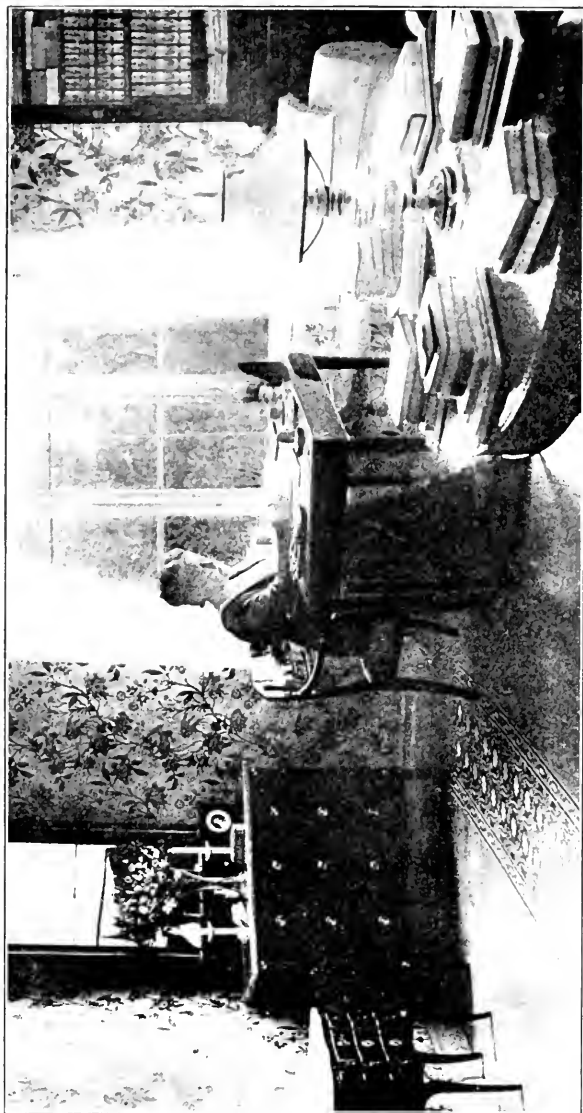
Just here a word in regard to Mrs. Howard's untiring work in the cause of Selma Lagerlöf in America may perhaps be in order. She is Swedish born but at an early age came to this country. She was reared in constant association with both Swedish and English scholars and is equally at home in both languages. As a young woman she returned to Sweden where she worked for some

years as a journalist, somewhat astounding the leisurely Scandinavians with her American methods of newspaper work. One of her first assignments—a “scoop” on her Swedish colleagues—was an interview with her literary idol, Selma Lagerlöf. This meeting was the first of many that developed a warm friendship between author and translator.

Later on at home in America she achieved success as a writer, as a translator of Scandinavian literature and as a lecturer. In Miss Lagerlöf's work, however, she finds her greatest delight for in Mrs. Howard's translations we feel this sympathy immediately and we perceive also that through her illuminative translations we get as deeply into the inner meanings and subtleties of Miss Lagerlöf's creations, as it is possible to do through an interchange of languages.

In “Jerusalem” (Volume I) Miss Lagerlöf is concerned with the preparation for—the psychological background, as one might say—the pilgrimage. The whole book is laid in Dalecarlia, centring around the ancient farm of the long line of Ingmarssons, “Big Ingmar,” “Strong Ingmar” and so on. Here we see the very soul of the Swedish people in a series of separate, but linked

DR. LAGERLÖF IN HER STUDY





pen-pictures, the history of two generations of a farmer family and the crisis of religious fanaticism in a rural Swedish parish. Among the peasant aristocracy of Dalecarlia attachment to the homestead is life itself. In "Jerusalem" this emotion is pitted on the one hand against religion, on the other against love. Hearts are broken in the struggle which enables Karin to sacrifice the Ingmar Farm to obey the inner voice which summons her on her religious pilgrimage, and which leads her brother, on the other hand, to abandon the girl of his heart and his life's personal happiness in order to win back the farm.

Of the book, Edwin Björkman, the Swedish American critic and writer said, "The first chapters alone are enough to make it immortal," while to quote J. B. Kerfoot again, this time from *Everybody's* "'Jerusalem' is, on the surface, only one of the simplest stories yet, in some strange way, it is the story of us all. And because its author is a child and a woman and a seer—these three—in one, a child may read 'Jerusalem,' or a sage and be equally enthralled."

Here in sharp contrast with the irresponsible Värmland cavaliers of "Gösta Berling," we have

the outwardly stolid and plodding peasants of Dalarne, or Dalecarlia. Through the witchery of Miss Lagerlöf's style we see their cloddish exterior, but we also see them right down to the cores of their very hearts and souls. And through her we see why the Dalecarlians have earned the name of "backbone of the Swedish nation." Here we encounter a people who for centuries have asked first of all, "is it right?" "is it my duty?"; a race who recognize no class differences, who know no nobility except that of character. Here we see a people already deeply religious, stirred to their very depths by the Helgumist movement.

In the opening chapters which comprise "Book One" we first meet Ingmar Ingmarsson ploughing in his ancestral fields and battling with his conscience. A sullen churl is this "Little" Ingmar; an Ingmarsson with no standing in the community; an Ingmarsson of all that illustrious line who carries a burden upon his conscience. To right that wrong, to marry Brita who had strangled her new-born babe and bring her to rule over the Ingmarsson farmstead, after a term in prison would only make matters worse. And so "Little" Ingmar, as he plodded up and down the field after

the plow took his troubles to his long dead father "Big" Ingmar as he was known the country round. A daring feat, this colloquy with the dead, for even so daring a novelist as Miss Lagerlöf, but carried out with such delicacy the reader feels no sense whatever of the bizarre. The decision is reached, and in the face of what he considers certain ostracism, Ingmar goes down to the city to meet and marry Brita as she comes out of prison. But here comes out the true Dalecarlian stuff. Instead of being shunned Ingmar is restored to standing in the community for his action and wins the title of "Big" Ingmar.

Book Two carries us on to that panorama of Swedish peasant life which ends with the dramatic departure of the Dalecarlians for Palestine.

In structure and technique it has nothing in common with the American or English idea of novel writing, yet from episode to episode we follow the characters, bit by bit getting deeper and deeper into their souls, and little by little understanding more clearly the inevitability of their destinies. Someone has called Miss Lagerlöf a symbolist. Perhaps symbolism is as good a term as another for that strangely fascinating texture

which knits all the chapters of "Jerusalem" together in one compelling epic.

The second volume, called in Swedish "Jerusalem in the Holy Land," deals with the lives of the Halgumists in Palestine, but ends as the first volume began in the ancient farmhouse of the Ingmarssons. This was published in Sweden in 1902, the year following "Jerusalem in Dalecarlia." It has not yet appeared in America.\*

Miss Lagerlöf's next book "Christ Legends" was published in 1904 and was brought out in this country in Mrs. Howard's translation in 1908. This is a collection of simple little tales of the visible miracles and inner mysteries surrounding the Christ from the time of His birth and up to the time of the Crusades.

The Swedish school authorities at this time feeling the need of a school reader which would serve to keep alive the rich store of folk lore and historic tradition which is the background of Swedish life, and at the same time teach the

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\* It may be mentioned here that announcement already has been made by Doubleday, Page & Co. of the second volume of Jerusalem under the title of "The Holy City Jerusalem, Vol. II." Velma Swanston Howard the translator has been at work upon this book for nearly a year and has only completed her work in time for fall publication.



wonders of the country's geography, commissioned Miss Lagerlöf to write such a book. "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils" and "The Further Adventures of Nils," (1906 and 1907) were the result.

If aught were needed to secure forever the place of the writer in the hearts of her countrymen, these books accomplished the purpose. Published in this country in Mrs. Howard's translation in 1907 and 1911 respectively, they immediately achieved a popularity which none of her previous books had enjoyed up to that time. They were recognized as classic stories for children of all ages and were circulated widely through the regular book channels, as well as through reading circles, schools, and special library lists. A practical point in regard to the popularity of these books is that they have appeared in the reprint editions, where they have been put in price within the reach of many, many thousands of children who otherwise could not own them. A handsome illustrated edition of "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils," with pictures by Mary Hamilton Frye, also has been issued with success.

In the face of such wide distribution it seems

almost superfluous to give here any descriptive note of the two books. Little Nils Holgersson, Morten Goosey Gander, the flock of wild geese and the other characters met there are now as much a part of the web and woof of story tradition in the American child mind as Andersen, Grimm and Aesop. Although these books were Miss Lagerlöf's first work for children they showed her perfectly at home before a juvenile audience. Indeed, by many, Nils is considered the author's crowning achievement.

The year following, 1908, appeared "The Girl From the Marsh Croft" a volume containing the novelette of that title and eight shorter stories, including "The Story of a Story" quoted in the early part of this sketch. "The Girl From the Marsh Croft" is a piece of work as powerful and at the same time as delicately idealistic as the first part of "Jerusalem." The volume was translated by Mrs. Howard and published in this country in 1910.

"Liljeerona's Home" appeared in 1911, and two years later was translated and published in

this country in the translation of Anna Barwell. While many of the short stories of Selma Lagerlöf have been laid in Värmland, and have employed some of the legendary characters of "Gösta Berling," here is a whole novel centring around the musician who, although he had a comfortable home, a loving wife, fine children, and a bounteous farm, must needs fritter away his time with the roystering cavaliers at Ekeby. "It is not luxury and good cheer which tempt me away," he plays on his violin when begging forgiveness from his wife, "not love for other women, nor glory, but life's seductive changes: Its sweetness, its bitterness, its riches I must feel about me." And here in this book we see at last the restless musician come home to stay, at peace with the world and with his own restless stormswept soul. Like "Gösta Berling" "Liljecrona's Home" is laid in the author's beloved Värmland and the Lövdalla (home) around which the tale is written is so much like Miss Lagerlöf's own Mårbacka that one might even say it was taken from it.

"The Legend of the Sacred Image" one of her most delicate tales of the Holy Land, translated

by Mrs. Howard, was made up separately as a Christmas gift book here and has enjoyed great popularity.

“The Emperor of Portugallia” appeared in Sweden in 1914, and in this country in Mrs. Howard’s translation in 1916. Dr. Lagerlöf’s latest collection, published last year in Sweden under the title, “Men and Trolls” is made up of legends, essays, and addresses.

For any comparison with “The Emperor of Portugallia” we must go back to “Jerusalem” and “The Story of Gösta Berling,” for in its touching simplicity, its spiritual message, and its artistic universality it is comparable only to the highest points of the author’s work. The story is so fresh in the public mind that a summary is perhaps unnecessary but for the sake of completeness I should like to set down here a brief outline.

From the highest critical judgment in this country has come genuine praise such as probably none of her previous books has received. In this romance is seen the fulfilment of that aim which may be found in all her work, of establishing that invisible

link between God and man—of the seen and unseen, of deep spiritual motive and outward action. Hildegarde Hawthorne, one of the first critics in this country to recognize the genius of Selma Lagerlöf says of “The Emperor of Portugallia” in the *New York Times*:

“Who shall convey the poignant pathos, the serene beauty, the deep and delicate understanding of the human heart which are revealed in this simple story? The very breath of life is in it, the beauty of great art, the unconsciousness of greatness. The setting of forest and mountain, barely indicated, yet intimately felt, the hint of magic and of mystery, that is, after all, forever present in life, the contact of good and evil, the joy that becomes sorrow, the sorrow that grows to a loftier and keener joy, all these are here, all woven together into a web of rare texture, strong and fine.”

Speaking of the spiritual message that Miss Lagerlöf brings in this book Prof. Stanwood Cobb, of the English Department at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, compares her to Rabindranath Tagore and calls her “a cosmic genius.”

Of the subtlety of its beauty, Ina Ten Eyck Firkins, in the *Bellman* says:

“Thought acts upon her pages like sunlight on a sensitive plate; no material medium is evident, but after the exposure the impression is revealed, delicate, distinct, truthful.”

While a reader impressed by its beauty writes to the publishers to call the book “a story, a song, an appeal, and a benediction.”

But to return to the story itself:

“The Emperor of Portugallia” is an epic of fatherhood—a Swedish Pere Goriót, it was called in France—and of the transcendent power of an alchemy which turned to fine gold that which before the whole world was dross.

It is small wonder that Jan of Ruffluck Croft never ceased to talk of the time that his little daughter came into the world because upon that day a great change came into his life. When first the tiny bundle was placed in his arms and he became conscious of another heart beating in unison with his own, the churlish peasant was transformed. The toil-worn clod became a being of love and happiness, the constant companion of his little girl. On the very next day after her birth he carried her to the door of the humble cottage, and as the ruddy rays of the departing sun bathed father and daughter in their splendour, he christened her Glory Goldie Sunnycastle, Godchild of the Sun.

And then, the irony of fate that sent the growing

girl out into the world to earn money that Jan and Katrina might not lose their home! Apparently it was all too easy, for after the first few letters containing the needed money, nothing more was heard from the Godchild of the Sun. How Jan took her absence, how he refused to believe ill of her, telling the neighbours that she was away reigning over her Empire of Portugallia and that he, the Emperor of Portugallia, would one day welcome her home with imperial splendour, constitutes as poignant and as deeply searching a story as Miss Lagerlöf has ever done.

But this is no cold, Northern study of Ibsenesque ghosts and mental derangements. "It is well, indeed, that we have her," says the *Boston Transcript*, "for otherwise we should possess but a one-sided understanding of the Northern lands."

In the climax we see poor Jan's sacrifice made good and the spiritual awakening of Glory Goldie accomplished.

#### HER PLAYS

Since winning the Nobel Prize, Selma Lagerlöf has written two plays—both successes. The first was a dramatization of "The Girl From the

Marsh Croft." It is still playing in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Holland. It was from Mrs. Howard's translation of "The Girl From the Marsh Croft" that Marie Claire made, in connection with the original Swedish, her dramatization of the book for the French stage. A pastoral comedy put on last season at the Royal Theatre, Stockholm, is Miss Lagerlöf's second dramatic success.



### III

#### HER HONOURS

UNLIKE so many great figures of literature Selma Lagerlöf has received full recognition in her own lifetime, both in her own country and by foreigners. Not the least of her honours does Dr. Lagerlöf count the tribute that has been paid her work abroad, and she treasures volumes of her books which have been translated into many strange languages. Her popularity in America, France, and Germany has been every bit as great as at home. In England, too, her works rank in popular and critical regard with the best of the British novelists, and large editions of both "Jerusalem" and "The Emperor of Portugallia" have found a ready sale and co-incident with the American uniform Northland Edition, it is announced that one of the large English publishers will do likewise. Besides her popularity in the French, English, and German speaking countries, Miss Lagerlöf's books have been translated into Rus-

sian, Spanish, Danish, Finnish, Dutch, Italian, Icelandic, while some of her books have appeared in Arabic, Hebraic, Armenian, and Japanese.

Of her honours at home it is almost unnecessary to speak. She was created Doctor of Literature by the University of Upsala in 1907 and two years later was awarded the Nobel Prize of \$40,000 for literature. This prize is given by that august body of eighteen Immortals, the Swedish Academy, and in choosing the only woman who so far ever has received it, they announced that the award was made "for reason of the noble idealism, the wealth of imagination, the soulful quality of style which characterize her works."

Five years later, in 1914, Dr. Lagerlöf was elected a member of the Academy, thus making her not only the first woman winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, but also the first and only woman member of the Swedish Academy.

The award of the Nobel Prize to Miss Lagerlöf was made at a banquet given December 10, 1909, at the Grand Hotel, Stockholm, by King Gustav. Her speech of acknowledgment took the novel form of a story which is typical of the best of her

work. It is here quoted in part, as translated by Mrs. Velma Swanston Howard:

“Your Royal Highness, Ladies and Gentlemen:

“A few days ago I sat in a railway carriage on my way to Stockholm. It was drawing on toward evening; it was dark outside and quite dim in the coach. My travelling companions were dozing, each in her corner, and I sat quietly listening to the rumbling of the train as it sped along the tracks.

“As I sat there, I began to think of the number of times that I had journeyed up to Stockholm.

“The entire autumn I had been living in my old home in Värmland, in the greatest solitude, and now I was obliged to appear among so many people. It was as though I had become somewhat afraid of life and movement back there in the solitude, and I grew troubled at the thought that I must make my appearance in the world again.

“Then I got to thinking about my father, and felt a sinking at the heart because he was not living, so I could tell him that I had been awarded the Nobel Prize. I knew that no one would have been so glad of it as he. Never have I met any

one who had such love and esteem for literature and writers as had he; and if he only could have known that the Swedish Academy had given me a great literary prize! It was a real affliction not to be able to tell him about it.

“And then my thoughts began to play. ‘Think if I were now riding to my old father in the Heavenly Kingdom! I seem to have heard of such things happening to others; why shouldn’t they happen to me?’

“When I meet father, I mused, he will probably be sitting in a rocking-chair on a veranda, facing a sunny garden full of flowers and birds; and naturally he will be reading ‘Frithiof’s Saga.’ And when he sees me he will lay down the book, push back his spectacles, rise and come toward me. And he will say, ‘Good day,’ and ‘Welcome,’ and ‘So you are out walking,’ and ‘How are you, my girl?’—in the same old way.

“Then, when he has settled himself in the rocker again, he will begin to wonder why I have come to him—‘Surely there is nothing wrong at home?’ he asks suddenly.

“‘Oh, no, father, all is well’; and I’m about to relate the news, but decide to hold it back a little

while, and take a roundabout way. 'I have just come to ask you for some good advice,' I say, assuming a troubled expression. 'The fact is, I am swamped with debts.'

"'I'm afraid you won't get much help in that line from me,' says father. 'One can say of this place, as they used to say of the old homesteads in Värmland, "You will find everything here but money.'"

"'But it's not in a money sense that I'm in debt," I say.

"'So it's worse than that, is it?' asks father. 'Now tell me all, from beginning to end, my girl!'

"'It's only fair that you should help me,' I say, 'because it was your fault at the start. Do you remember how you used to sit at the piano and sing Bellman ballads to us children? And do you remember how you let us read Tegnér and Runeberg and Andersen twice every winter? In that way I came by my first big debt. Father, how can I ever repay them for teaching me to love the sagas and their heroes, and the fatherland and human life in all its greatness and all its frailty?'

"As I speak, father straightens himself in his chair, and a lovely light comes into his eyes. 'I'm

glad I had a share in getting you into that debt,' he says.

“‘You don’t mean to tell me that the Swedish Academy——’ says father looking me in the eyes. Then he understands that it is true. And every wrinkle in his old face begins to quiver and his eyes to fill up with tears.

“‘What shall I say to those who have determined this matter, and to those who have named me for the honour? Consider, father, it is not only honours and gold they have given me, but think how much faith they must have had in me, when they dared to distinguish me before the whole world! How shall I ever cancel that debt of gratitude?’

“Father sits and ponders a while; then he wipes away the tears of joy, shakes himself, and strikes his fist on the arm of the chair. ‘I don’t care to sit here any longer and muse on things which no one, either in heaven or on earth, can answer!’ he says. ‘If you have received the Nobel Prize, I shan’t trouble myself about anything but to be happy.’

“Your Royal Highness,—Ladies and Gentlemen—since I got no better answer to all my queries,

it only remains for me to ask you to join me in a toast of gratitude, which I have the honour to propose to the Swedish Academy."

Not only in literature has Selma Lagerlöf been honoured. In her article in the *Yale Review* on "Four Scandinavian Feminists" Hana Astrup Larsen considers her influence upon the feminist movement in Sweden. Miss Larsen refers to Miss Lagerlöf as "the author of the two 'best sellers' in Sweden next to the Bible, the most beloved woman in Sweden, and the only one besides Ellen Key whose fame has spanned the world." She then goes on to say:

"When she abandoned her habit of reserve and appeared as the outspoken champion of suffrage at the international suffrage congress held in Stockholm, in 1911, the feminists of Sweden considered it the most important victory they had won in years. Her speech, which is worthy to be preserved among the classics of the movement, is characteristically Northern and breathes the Northerner's passionate love of home.

"'Have we done nothing,' she asks, 'which

entitles us to equal rights with man? Our time on earth has been long—as long as his.’ She answers her own question by saying that woman has created the home and made it happy and beloved. Man has created the state and made it great; but all his efforts have not succeeded in making it beloved or happy. ‘Witness the hatred between the classes; witness the stifled cries from beneath, all the threats and revolutions. At this very moment, when governments are tottering, admirably constructed though they be, when social revolution appears at our very door—it is right here that the great woman’s invasion of the man’s field of labour and of the territory of the state begins!’”

This speech has been translated into all the languages of Europe and has been circulated widely throughout this country by the woman suffrage movement.

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## IV

### HER HOME

**A**ND so at last we come to Dr. Lagerlöf's home which is so deeply imbedded in everything that she writes. For a knowledge of her work it is well to understand her love of the place of her childhood. The early years of Miss Lagerlöf's literary career, in fact from 1897 to 1908, were spent at Falun in Dalarne or Dalecarlia, the home where she got so close to the hearts of those sturdy self-reliant peasants we met in "Jerusalem." In 1908, however, she returned to Mårbacka Manor, the home of her birth, the Liljecrona's Lövdalla of so many of her stories, the happy little farmstead where she breathed in the wealth of legend and folk lore which gave the world "Gösta Berling" and the rest.

But let us have the author herself tell us of her return to Mårbacka and of her restoration of the old place to its ancient state as she had known it through childhood.

In his journey homeward from Lapland with the wild geese in "The Further Adventures of Nils" the little boy is set down at a place in Värmland called Mårbacka where he falls into conversation with Mrs. Brown Owl. Miss Lagerlöf continues:

"The very year that Nils Holgersson travelled with the wild geese there was a woman who thought of writing a book about Sweden which would be suitable for children to read in the schools. She had thought of this from Christmas time until the following autumn, but not a line of the book had she written. At last she became so tired of the whole thing that she said to herself: 'You are not fitted for such work. Sit down and compose stories and legends, as usual, and let another write this book, which has got to be serious and instructive, and in which there must not be one untruthful word.'

"It was as good as settled that she would abandon the idea. But she thought, very naturally, it would have been a joy to write something beautiful about Sweden, and it was hard for her to relinquish her work. Finally, it occurred to her that maybe it was because she lived in the city, with only gray streets and house walls around her,

that she could make no headway with the writing. Perhaps if she were to go into the country, where she could see woods and fields, it might go better.

. . . . .

“She had never imagined that it would be so wonderful to come home! As she sat in the cart and drove toward the old homestead she fancied that she was growing younger and younger every minute, and that soon she would no longer be an oldish person with hair that was turning gray, but a little girl in short skirts with a long flaxen braid. As she recognized each farm along the road, she could not picture anything else than that everything at home would be as in bygone days. Her father and mother and brothers and sisters would be standing on the porch to welcome her, the old housekeeper would run to the kitchen window to see who was coming, and Nero and Freja and another dog or two would come bounding and jumping up on her.

“The nearer she approached the place the happier she felt. It was autumn, which meant a busy time with a round of duties. It must have been all these varying duties which prevented home from

ever being monotonous. All along the way the farmers were digging potatoes, and probably they would be doing likewise at her home. That meant that they must begin immediately to grate potatoes and make potato flour. The autumn had been a mild one; she wondered if everything in the garden had already been stored. The cabbages were still out, but perhaps the hops had been picked, and all the apples. . . .

. . . . .

“She had heard that it was very much changed, and it certainly was! But she did not observe this now in the evening. She thought, rather, that everything was quite the same. There was the pond, which in her youth had been full of carp and where no one dared fish, because it was father’s wish that the carp should be left in peace. Over there were the menservants’ quarters, the larder and barn, with the farmyard bell over one gable and the weather-vane over the other. The house yard was like a circular room, with no outlook in any direction, as it had been in her father’s time—for he had not the heart to cut down as much as a bush.

“She lingered in the shadow under the big mountain-ash at the entrance to the farm, and stood looking about her. As she stood there a strange thing happened: a flock of doves came and lit beside her.

“She could hardly believe that they were real birds, for doves are not in the habit of moving about after sundown. It must have been the beautiful moonlight that had awakened them. They must have thought it was dawn and flown from their dove-cotes, only to become confused, hardly knowing where they were. When they saw a human being they flew over to her, as if she would set them right.

“There had been many flocks of doves at the manor when her parents lived there, for the doves were among the creatures which her father had taken under his special care. If one ever mentioned the killing of a dove, it put him in a bad humour. She was pleased that the pretty birds had come to meet her in the old home. Who could tell but the doves had flown out in the night to show her they had not forgotten that once upon a time they had a good home there.

“Perhaps her father had sent his birds with a

greeting to her, so that she would not feel so sad and lonely when she came to her former home.

“As she thought of this, there welled up within her such an intense longing for the old times that her eyes filled with tears. Life had been beautiful in this place. They had had weeks of work broken by many holiday festivities. They had toiled hard all day, but at evening they had gathered around the lamp and read Tegnér and Runeberg, ‘*Fru*’ Lenngren and ‘*Mamsell*’ Bremer. They had cultivated grain, but also roses and jasmine.

. . . . .

“‘Nowhere else in the world do they know how to get so much out of life as they did at one of these little homesteads in my childhood!’ she thought. ‘There was just enough work and just enough play, and every day there was a joy. How I should love to come back here again! Now that I have seen the place, it is hard to leave it.’

“Then she turned to the flock of doves and said to them—laughing at herself all the while:

“‘Won’t you fly to father and tell him that I long to come home? I have wandered long enough

in strange places. Ask him if he can't arrange it so that I may soon turn back to my childhood's home.'

"The moment she had said this the flock of doves rose and flew away. She tried to follow them with her eyes, but they vanished instantly. It was as if the whole white company had dissolved in the shimmering air.

"The doves had only just gone when she heard a couple of piercing cries from the garden, and as she hastened thither she saw a singular sight. There stood a tiny midget, no taller than a hand's breadth, struggling with a brown owl. At first she was so astonished that she could not move. But when the midget cried more and more pitifully, she stepped up quickly and parted the fighters.

. . . . .

"‘I understand that you take me for one of the tiny folk,’ said the midget, ‘but I’m a human being, like yourself, although I have been transformed by an elf.’

. . . . .

"The boy did not mind telling her of his adventures, and, as the narrative proceeded, she who

listened to him grew more and more astonished and happy.

“‘What luck to run across one who has travelled all over Sweden on the back of a goose!’ thought she. ‘Just this which he is relating I shall write down in my book. Now I need worry no more over that matter. It was well that I came home. To think that I should find such help as soon as I came to the old place!’

“Instantly another thought flashed into her mind. She had sent word to her father by the doves that she longed for home, and almost immediately she had received help in the matter she had pondered so long. Might not this be the father’s answer to her prayer?”



## V

### MISS LAGERLÖF TO-DAY

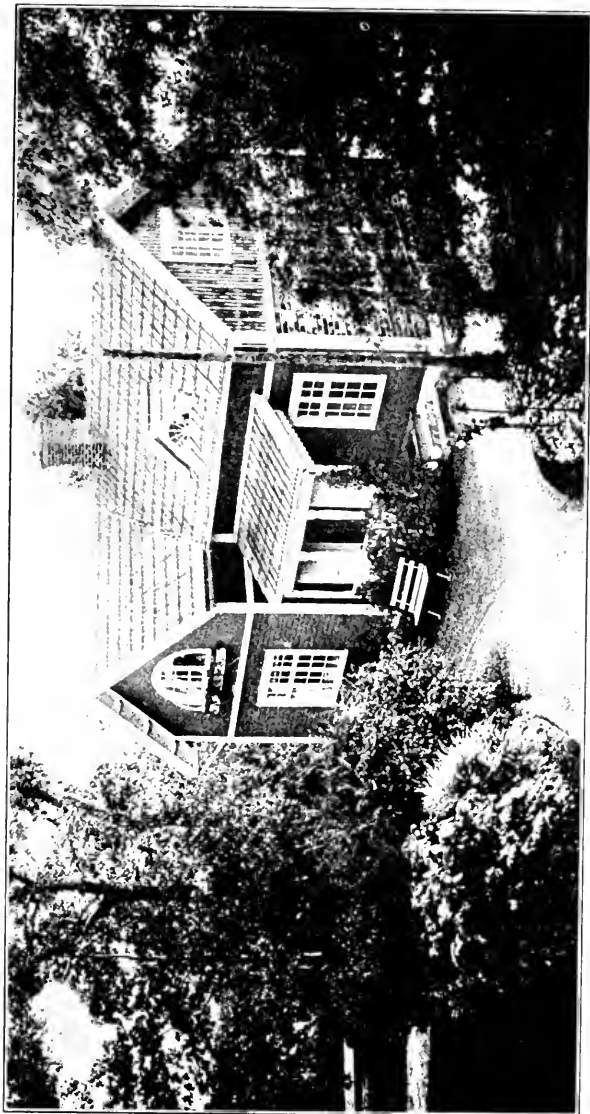
**H**ERE at Mårbacka and at her winter home in Falun, Dalarne, she spends her time, writing much less than of old now for the demands upon her time and energy are many and great. But ever more generous is the outpouring of love from her warm human understanding and tender woman's heart. Through her ready knowledge of the other Scandinavian languages, and with English, French, German, and Italian she keeps abreast of all the great world movements. A lover of solitude, she has nevertheless been visited by many Americans and to each and every one she put more questions than did the interviewer. Woman suffrage, Christian Science, Socialism, temperance, and the war in all its relations to neutrals are subjects of which she cannot hear enough from Americans.

Both Mårbacka and Falun are typical Swedish homes redolent of the rich store of tradition

behind her art. The winter home at Falun is a picturesque old cottage which was built nearly 200 years ago, and unlike the prevailing austere architecture of the province it has a quaint beauty and charm that sets it apart from its neighbours.

Within is an atmosphere of simple dignity, of warm hospitality, for Miss Lagerlöf lives and works amidst surroundings in harmony with her personality. From beneath a crown of white hair her eyes look at and through one, kindly yet penetrating, and always ready to twinkle happily at the humour which she sees in life. For years she has lived in these two homes with her aged mother, lavishing love, not only upon those near and dear to her, but upon all humanity. Miss Lagerlöf's father died when she was a young girl, but her mother lived until about a year ago.

Of the Americans who have called upon Miss Lagerlöf perhaps the only one to establish a friendship which has lasted for years, and grows closer as time goes on, is her translator, Mrs. Velma Swanston Howard. The account of the latter's first visit to Miss Lagerlöf at Falun shows much of the author's personality. Mrs. Howard,



DR. LAGERLÖF'S WINTER HOME AT FALLN

At this house in the heart of Delmarne Miss Lagerlöf spends her winters, and it was here close to the scene of "Jerusalem" that she wrote that classic



as mentioned before, was engaged in journalism in Stockholm, and had been told by her friends that Miss Lagerlöf never saw interviewers. Mrs. Howard, with American energy, however, opened a correspondence which finally resulted in an invitation, not for an interview, but simply for a visit.

Of this first visit Mrs. Howard said:

“Miss Lagerlöf received me with the cordiality of old friendship. There was no feeling of strangeness. She is one of those rare personalities with whom one may think aloud without fear of being misunderstood. She never asks a personal question. She is a ravishing listener. She was then on the shady side of forty—a woman of medium height, with fine, fair face, splendid head superbly set on neck and shoulders. Her beautiful white hands—she wears a five and a half glove—fascinated me. Her sense of humour was keen. There was a twinkle in her eye, a twist about the mouth, a certain sly humour that preceded her speech, while her chuckle was inimitable.

“‘Shall we go to the park?’ she asked, apparently studying how best to entertain me.

“‘If you do not object, I should prefer to stay where we are.’ Her relief was obvious. Then

she fell to questioning me about America. Her curiosity was insatiable. She was eager to know about American women. She admired their freedom, vivacity, initiative. She was immensely interested in Mary Baker Eddy. That a woman should have founded a religious cult of such tremendous following amazed and delighted her.

“‘I have not been allowed to interview you,’ I laughingly said as we parted that night, at eleven o’clock. ‘Now I shall have to write how I have been interviewed by Sweden’s most beloved author.’

“That interview, which my Stockholm friends assured me was not to be had,” concluded Mrs. Howard, “sowed the seed of a friendship that culminated in my becoming Miss Lagerlöf’s English translator.’ I had two unforgettable days at Värmland, on my last visit to Sweden in the summer of 1914, and although my hostess was at work on a new book we had many happy hours together. Strangely enough, the dining-room is panelled with Washington State landscapes, painted by Miss Lagerlöf’s uncle, who lived some years at Seattle.”

Sweden’s most popular author now passes her-

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summers at Mårbacka Manor, the home of her youth, which she rebought after twenty years' absence. She continues to employ there, to the chagrin of its overseer, a corps of aged servitors whose youth went to the development of the estate. Her fifty-eight fruitful years find her with a generous income from her books and plays, and it is with her a joy to spend her time and her substance in the service of humanity and of her loved ones.

## SELMA LAGERLOF'S SWEDEN

Herewith a key to the map of Selma Lagerlöf's Sweden giving as far as possible the exact geographical names of the places Dr. Lagerlöf gave fictional names in her books.

Actual places in Roman letters.

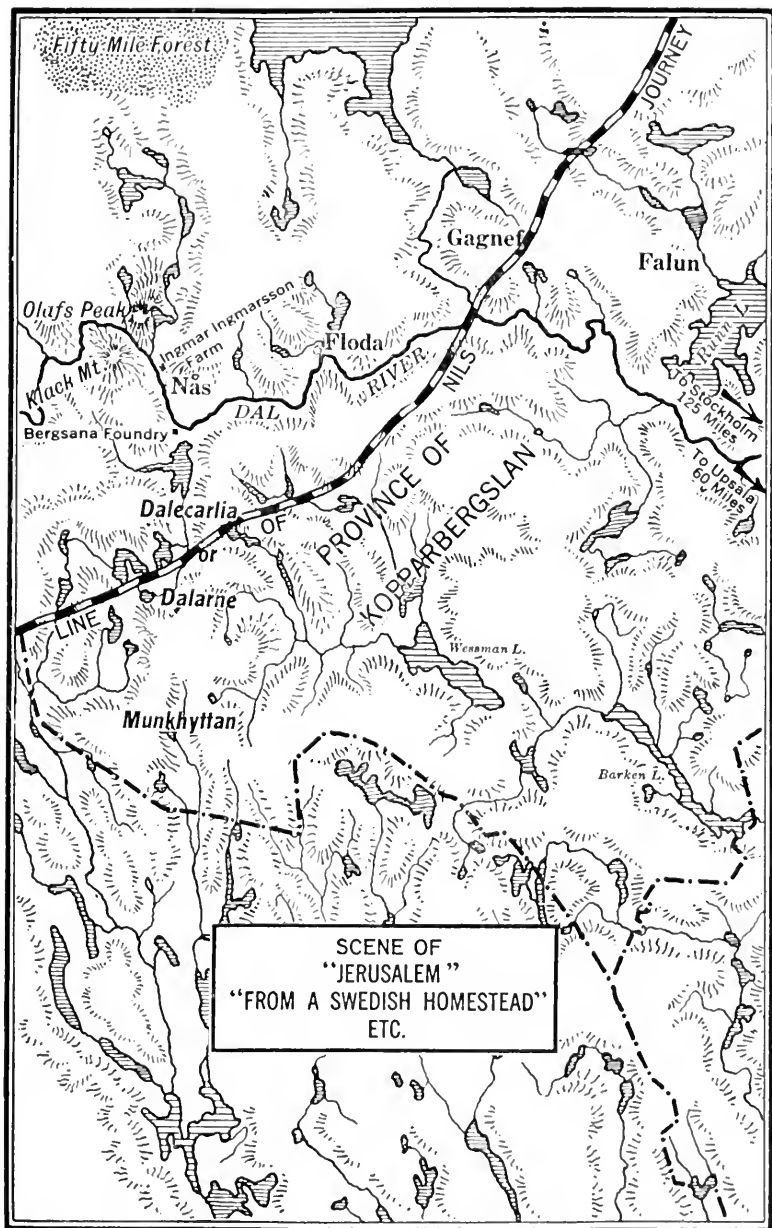
Author's fictional names in *Italic*.

FICTIONAL NAME	ACTUAL GEOGRAPHICAL NAME	
<i>Löven or Long Lake</i>	Lake Fryken	See: "The Story of Gösta Berling" "The Girl From the Marsh-croft" "Legends" Etc.
<i>Ekeby</i> . . . . .	Rottneros	
<i>Sjö</i> . . . . .	Öjervik	
<i>Björne</i> . . . . .	Sundsberg	
<i>Lovik</i> . . . . .	V. Emtervik	
<i>Broby</i> . . . . .	Amberg	
<i>Björksjon</i> . . . . .	Lake Rotinar	
<i>Sandvik</i> . . . . .	Lysvik	
<i>Fors</i> . . . . .	Björkefors	
<i>Bro</i> . . . . .	Sunne	
<i>Borg</i> . . . . .	Herresta	See: "The Story of Gösta Berling" "The Emperor of Portugallia" "Liljecrona's Home"
<i>Svartsjö</i> . . . . .	Ö. Emtervik	
<i>Närlunda</i> . . . . .	On Klar River	
<i>Big Marsh</i> . . . . .	Bordering Klar River	
<sup>1</sup> <i>Liljecronàs Lövdalla</i>	Mårbacka	
<i>Doreness</i> . . . . .	Skacks	
<i>Dore Lake</i> . . . . .	Skacks Lake	
<i>Råglanda</i> . . . . .	Southwestern Dalarne	
<i>Munkhyttan</i> . . . . .	Upsala	
_____	Fifty Mile Forest	See: "The Emperor of Portugallia" See: "From a Swedish Home- stead" See: "Jerusalem"
<sup>2</sup> _____	Falun	
<i>The Parish</i> . . . . .	Nås	
_____	Dal River	
_____	Gagnef	
_____	Floda	

<sup>1</sup>Miss Lagerlöf's own native home where "The Story of Gösta Berling" and most of her other books were written.

<sup>2</sup>Miss Lagerlöf's winter home where "Jerusalem" was written.







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